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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SOFIA 000510

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/NCE NORDBERG

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA GRAPPLES WITH COMMUNIST-ERA FILES AMID  
PUBLIC CYNICISM

REF: A. (A) SOFIA 1655

[1](#)B. (B) SOFIA 1499

Classified By: Political and Economic Counselor Brad A. Freden for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Seventeen years after the fall of communism, the Bulgarian National Assembly disgorged a law to open communist-era state security files. Rather than clearing the political air, passage of the law has further clouded it. Few Bulgarians believe the unredacted files of Bulgaria's current ruling elite (if they have not been already destroyed) will see the light of day anytime soon. President Parvanov and Interior Minister Petkov fought a barely-concealed rear-guard battle to de-fang the "Dossier Commission" before it even came into being, fueling public cynicism. Unlike in Poland, the effort to "out" former State Security agents has been driven not only (or even mainly) by the Right, but by a member of the ruling coalition --the mainly ethnic-Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms, many of whose leaders long ago acknowledged their collaboration. Some here argue that the real secret of the files is not who collaborated, but what happened to the assets of the Bulgarian State and Communist Party (which were at the time interchangeable). We share the public's doubts that full disclosure is imminent, but believe the new law is a necessary first step toward full accountability. END SUMMARY.

POLITICAL GAMES

[1](#)2. (C) In December 2006, Bulgaria adopted a groundbreaking law to open the files of the former State Security Committee. Originally on a fast track, the law encountered some bumps before passage as politicians zeroed in on the implications --namely, exposing prominent and influential public figures, as well as still active diplomats and senior civil servants. Under the law, a nominally independent, nine-member commission elected by parliament is empowered to review the communist-era files. After months of wrangling and infighting, Bulgaria's parliament on April 5 finally elected that commission, largely seen as a mediocre group given the complicated and obscure political compromises within the ruling coalition.

[1](#)3. (C) MPs across the political spectrum openly blamed the Bulgarian Socialist party (BSP) --the leading coalition partner-- for the months of delay, with maverick BSP MP Tatyana Doncheva telling local media about BSP officials who were "formally in favor of the files' opening while in practice working for their closure." A vocal advocate of the communist archives' opening, Doncheva said "some people wanted to appoint guards of their personal files" in the commission, a reference to President Georgi Parvanov and his acknowledged file. The commission's composition, coupled

with the controversies that accompanied its formation, have undermined its credibility even before it has started work. The details are illustrative.

14. (C) Doncheva pointed to Parvanov and Interior Minister Rumen Petkov as the key decision-makers with regard to the BSP's nominations to the commission. Former Socialist Party leader Parvanov, who won re-election as president last October, previously voiced strong opposition to the files' declassification. Allegations that Parvanov collaborated with the intelligence service led him to acknowledge last June the existence of his intelligence file. The President, a historian whose code-name was "Gotse" (Ref B), insists that his involvement with State Security was passive and involved only historical research.

15. (C) A close Parvanov associate, Petkov remains a firm opponent of the files' opening. He is allegedly among the BSP politicians who exercised tacit pressure on BSP MPs to limit the scope of the law by excluding from it mid-level intelligence chiefs. In contrast, Prime Minister (and current BSP chairman) Sergei Stanishev has been generally supportive of the process. MRF Deputy Chairman Kassim Dal, another staunch supporter of disclosure, said the commission's formation had been obstructed by the same forces that fought to prevent the adoption of the law -influential BSP circles and the leadership of the current secret services. The process clearly shows that the present-day secret services are not yet reformed, Dal insisted.

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BSP TRIES TO STACK THE DECK  
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16. (C) The most telling example of BSP's conflict of interest was the controversy related to the nomination for the

SOFIA 00000510 002 OF 003

commission of Hristo Marinski, a former police chief who currently serves as Parvanov's advisor on information security. It turned out that Marinski, who was also BSP's favorite for the key post of commission chair, had himself worked for the communist secret services. This information was concealed by the Interior Ministry and revealed only after MPs from the Domestic Security Commission requested to check personally Marinski's record. Before that, Interior Minister Petkov had assured the MPs that no nominees for commission members had ties with the communist State Security. The Socialists withdrew Marinski's nomination and proposed another candidate, also close to Parvanov, journalist Tatyana Kiryakova, who works for the BSP mouthpiece "Duma."

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE ANARCHO-COMMUNIST  
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17. (C) Meanwhile, the opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) shot itself in the foot with the nomination of Georg Konstantinov, a 73-year-old "former dissident" ccused, it later turned out, of attempting to blw up a statue of Stalin and of placing a bomb infront of the apartment of the East German Cultural Attache in 1953. (Asked why he had tried to blw up the East German, Konstantinov, a self-describd anarho-communist, said he thought the Attachewas British.) The National Security Service (NSS denied him a clearance. UDF leader Petar Stoyano blasted the decision as politically motivated, nd said the UDF would not participate in the comission, thereby lending further credence to the viw that his party is circling the drain.

COMMSSION WITH "ZERO PUBLIC CONFIDENCE"  
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18. (SBU) The three parties in the ruling coalition named

seven members of the commission, while two small center-right opposition parties had one representative each. The Socialists have four members of the commission including the powerful chairman's post, which went to MP Evtim Kostadinov, a compromise figure selected after Marinski was dropped. A BSP back-bencher previously unknown to the public, Kostadinov is a former regional police chief who had started his career in the communist militia.

¶9. (SBU) The commission's first test will be to check all candidates for members of the European Parliament before the vote scheduled for May 20. It is then expected to open the files of all public figures - politicians, government appointees, parliamentarians, as well as senior civil servants, magistrates, bankers, and journalists. It will publish this information on the commission's Internet site. The current civilian and military intelligence services have eight months to transfer their communist-era archives to the commission, meaning that in practice any review of the MEP candidates' files will be done by the services themselves.

COMMENT: A DIFFICULT BUT WORTHWHILE PROCESS  
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¶10. (C) Politicians and commentators have told us they expect stiff resistance on part of the current intelligence services to actually handing over the archives to the commission. Some suspect that files may have been destroyed or tampered with, whereas others believe the secret services have in fact been zealous guardians. Insiders believe that although protracted and difficult, the review process will help expose links of current politicians and public figures to State Security, thus diminishing their influence in Bulgaria's public life. The opening of the communist-era files is also expected to prevent their further use as a tool for blackmail in Bulgarian political life. The archives could yield information about some of the most shameful episodes of Bulgaria's communist past, such as the operation of prison camps in the first decades of communism and the assimilation (and expulsion) campaign against ethnic Turks in the 1980s. The files may also unveil information about the distribution of state finances in the late 1980s, which provided the resources for many post-communist commercial banks and businesses, as well as connections between post-communist organized-crime groups and State Security's pre-1990 smuggling channels.

¶11. (C) MP Kassim Dal speculated that these past deeds may prove more embarrassing to the current Bulgarian Socialist Party than the revelations of individual collaboration. According to Dal, officials as high as Parvanov and Petkov are more concerned about covering money trails that might

SOFIA 00000510 003 OF 003

lead indirectly to them. There has also been recurring speculation that high-ranking Bulgarian diplomats currently serving in Western capitals, including the Ambassadors to Washington and Paris, will be linked to the State Security Service. Many of these should come as no surprise -- Elena Poptodorova, after all, started her career as Todor Zhivkov's interpreter -- but will likely be used by the opposition to embarrass the government. Which leads to a final point: the files make no distinction between the redeemed and the unredeemed; all were frozen in amber on the date that communism collapsed here. Only those powerful enough to keep their files hidden will escape this imperfect judgment.  
BEYRLE